THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI V. RADHIKA SELVI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) In view of the reply of part (a) these questions do not arise.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Revamping tea industry

855. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India exported 211 million kg. of tea in 1998, but the figure fell to 200 million kg. in 2006, and India's tea exports declined to 75.7 million kg. in the first half of this year despite the fact that India has around 28 per cent of global tea production;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a considerable number of tea gardens have gone sick due to lack of infrastructure, modernization and efficient management; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to revamp the tea industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The quantity of tea exported from the country during 2006 was 218.73 million kg. as compared to 210.34 million kg. in 1998. However, due to strong appreciation of Rupee in dollar terms and also decline in exports to countries like Iraq, Pakistan etc. the volume of export of tea from India during the first six months of 2007 as compared to the corresponding period of last years has marginally declined, as is evident from the following table:

Year/Period	Quantity (M.Kg)
2007 (Jan-June)*	75.73
2006 (Jan-June)	87.48

*Estimated and subject to revision Source: Tea Board

(b) and (c) As on 1st April, 2007, 33 tea gardens were reported to be closed in the country. The depressed price situation since mid-1999 coupled with other factors like high cost of production, low prices of tea, ownership disputes etc. have affected the viability of tea gardens resulting in the closure of these gardens.

The Government has recently announced a rehabilitation package for the closed tea gardens. Ten of these 33 closed tea gardens have opened so far. Tea Board is already implementing a number of plan schemes for the overall development of the tea sector under which financial/technical assistance is provided to the tea industry. In addition, a Special Purpose Tea Fund has also been set up for financing replantation/rejuvenation activities aimed at improving the age profile of old tea bushes to improve quality and productivity.

WTO in Doha

†856. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.